

NIFA in the News – Week of April 23, 2012

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In the News

Researchers find additional evidence that families that eat together may be the healthiest (EurekAlert 4/23). To both summarize what is known about this timely topic and create a model that might be used to educate parents and other caregivers as to the importance of family mealtimes, researchers at Rutgers recently evaluated results from 68 previously published scientific reports considering the association between family mealtime and children's health. They specifically looked at how frequency or atmosphere of family meals was related to consumption of both healthy foods (e.g., fruits and vegetables) and those considered less desirable (e.g., soft drinks). The researchers also evaluated if scientific evidence actually supports the idea that more frequent family meals can lead to decreased obesity. This study was funded by the United States Department of Agriculture, National Institute of Food and Agriculture. [Link](#)

Congress Looks for Donors to Boost Agricultural Science (Science Magazine 4/24). Working under tight budget constraints, a Senate committee has proposed chartering a foundation that would raise funds to support agricultural research. The tough times are no surprise to advocates for agricultural research. Taking a page from biomedical research, they lobbied Congress to charter a nonprofit foundation and authorize the U.S. Department of Agriculture to accept funding from it. "We need to find ways to stimulate investment in food and agriculture and this helps accomplish that," says plant biologist Roger Beachy of the Washington University in St. Louis, the former director of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture. [Link](#)

Choose to Change combats childhood obesity across state (The Daily Athenaeum 4/25). West Virginia University researchers for Choose to Change, an effort to prevent childhood obesity, announced their progress and future goals at a community kickoff Tuesday. Choose to Change is aimed at improving the eating habits and physical activity levels of West Virginia children. The program is funded by a U.S. Department of Agriculture and Food Research Initiative grant of about \$4.8 million. It began in

April 2011 and will span a period of five years. [Link](#)

Lower Food and Fuel Costs Could Result from MU Researcher's Battle Against Soy Pest (Newsroom America 4/26). Americans rarely see soybeans on their plates, but soybeans account for two-thirds of the world's animal feed and more than half the edible oil consumed in the U.S., according to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). To guard the productivity of this important crop, University of Missouri plant pathologist Melissa Mitchum and colleagues at Iowa State University and North Carolina State University recently received a \$466,000 grant from the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture to continue their research on protecting soybeans from nematode parasites, which cause \$1.3 billion annually in soybean crop losses in the U.S. [Link](#)

Senate Appropriations Committee approves ag discretionary spending for FY 2013 (Agri-Pulse 4/26). The Senate Committee on Appropriations approved the FY 2013 Agriculture Appropriations bill today with overall discretionary spending for fiscal year 2013 at \$20.785 billion. The fiscal year 2013 bill provides \$1.239 billion for the National Institute on Food and Agriculture (NIFA) and \$1.101 billion for the Agricultural Research Service. Specifically within NIFA, the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative is funded at \$298 million, the Hatch Act is funded at \$236 million, the McIntire-Stennis Cooperative Forestry program is funded at \$33 million, and Smith-Lever Sections 3(b) and 3(c) is funded at \$294 million. [Link](#)

Spending plan for USDA, FDA approved (Western Farm Press 4/27). The Senate Appropriations Committee reported legislation that would provide the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) \$20.785 billion for discretionary programs for fiscal year (FY) 2013, an increase over the current fiscal year's 19.565 billion. The National Institute on Food and Agriculture (NIFA) research would receive \$1.239 billion and Agricultural Research Service \$1.101 billion. [Link](#)

Organic industry check-off program proposed in Senate ag committee's farm bill (Food Consumer 4/27). The U.S. Senate Agriculture Committee Thursday voted 16-5 to approve its version of the 2012 farm bill. Other farm bill benefits to organic include: Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative (OREI), the largest research grant program dedicated to organic agriculture, maintains funding at \$80 million over five years through 2017. Farm bill provisions hurting organics include: Drastic funding cuts for the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program, neglecting the need to support those farmers that ensure organic farming's future. \$4 million funding cuts to OREI from \$20 million a year to \$16 million a year. Ignores additional research into public plant breeding via Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI), the largest grant program that funds agriculture research at USDA. [Link](#)

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